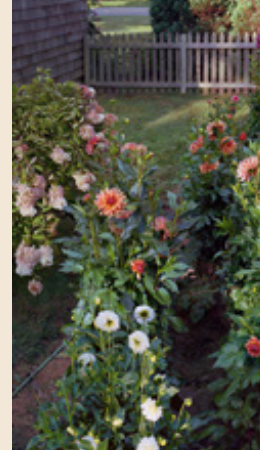


JULY 26, 2024

IN FULL SUMMER BLOOM FLOWERS IN CANADIAN ART

When a rose is more than a rose.

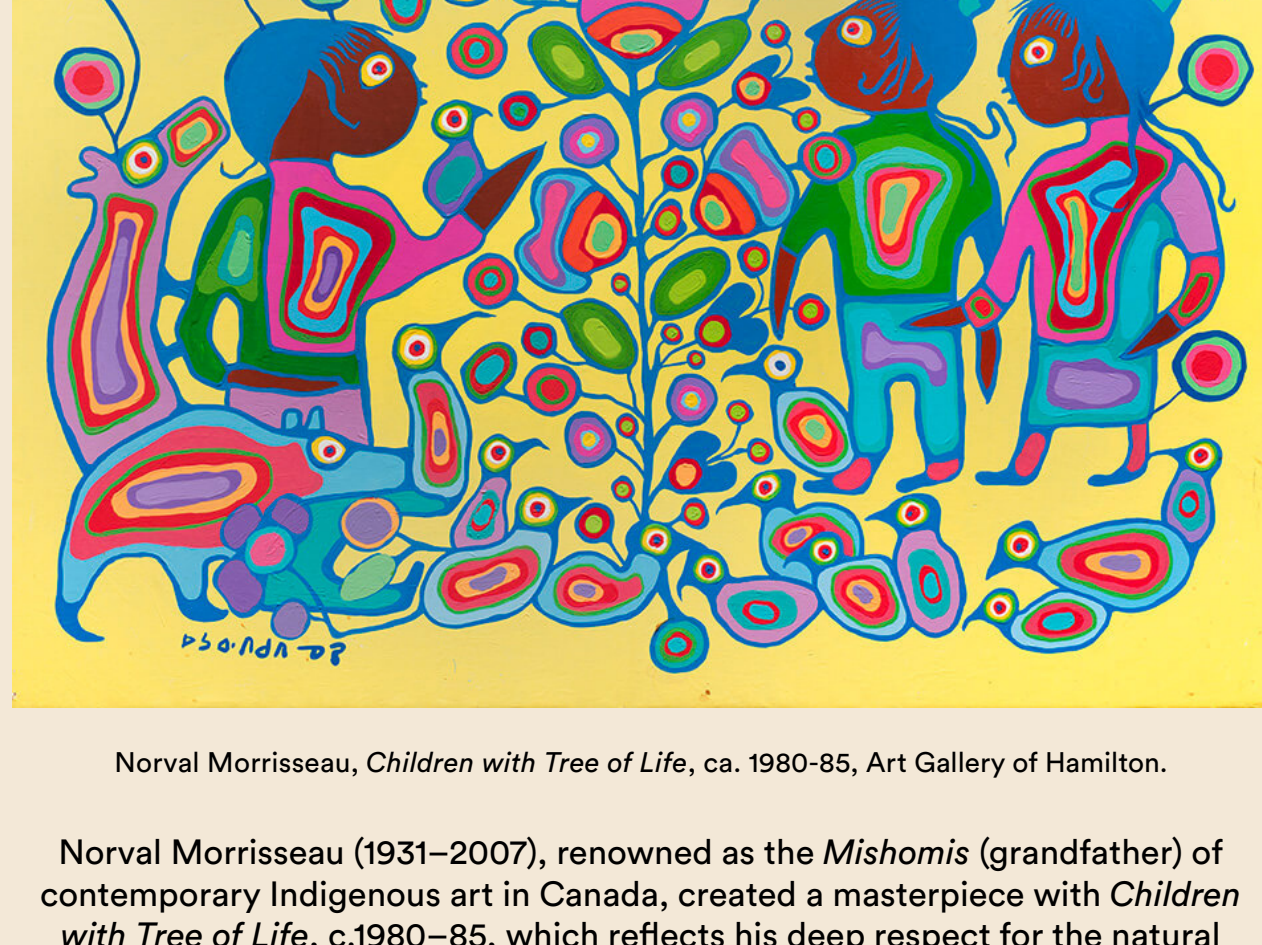
Christi Belcourt, *This Painting is a Mirror*, 2012, collection of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.



In the history of art, the depiction of a flower has long been about much more than a presentation of petals. Blooms have held different meanings including love, grief, purity, sorrow, identity, and mortality. Flowers have conveyed the vulnerability and joy of human existence, as well as our connection to the world around us. To mark the height of summer, we're looking at Canadian artists who have drawn inspiration from nature's bouquets. From the intricate designs of Christi Belcourt (b.1966) (above), to the spiritually charged buds of Norval Morrisseau (1931-2007), here's how some of the nation's greatest historical and contemporary artists have reflected on nature's beauty—brimming with vibrance at the end of July.

Sara Angel
Founder and Executive Director, Art Canada Institute

FLOWER STAND, SCUTTLEHOLE ROAD, WATER MILL, NEW YORK

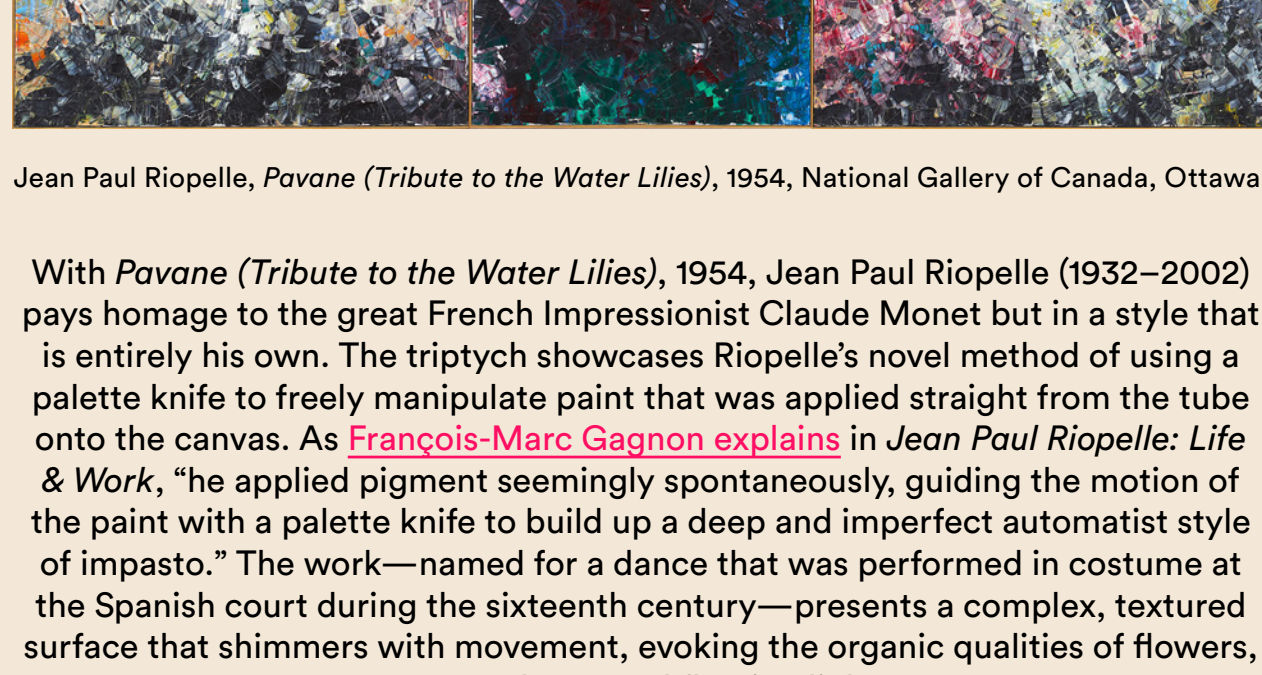
By Scott McFarland

Scott McFarland, *Flower Stand, Scuttlehole Road, Water Mill, New York*, 2013.

While *Flower Stand, Scuttlehole Road, Water Mill, New York*, 2013, seemingly reveals a lush garden at summer's peak, the work—a composite of images—is in fact a complex, hyperrealist scene. Toronto-based Scott McFarland (b.1975) uses digital layering techniques to manipulate and challenge the notion that a photograph is a snapshot of [one single moment](#). The work illustrates how human relationships to place and perception of the natural world are interwoven with representational traditions. The garden's beauty stands in contrast to a cottage-like country house in the distance. A fence separates the world of nature from the one we create, reminding us that photography's connection to reality is a combination of accuracy and artifice.

Learn more about [Scott McFarland](#)

CHILDREN WITH TREE OF LIFE

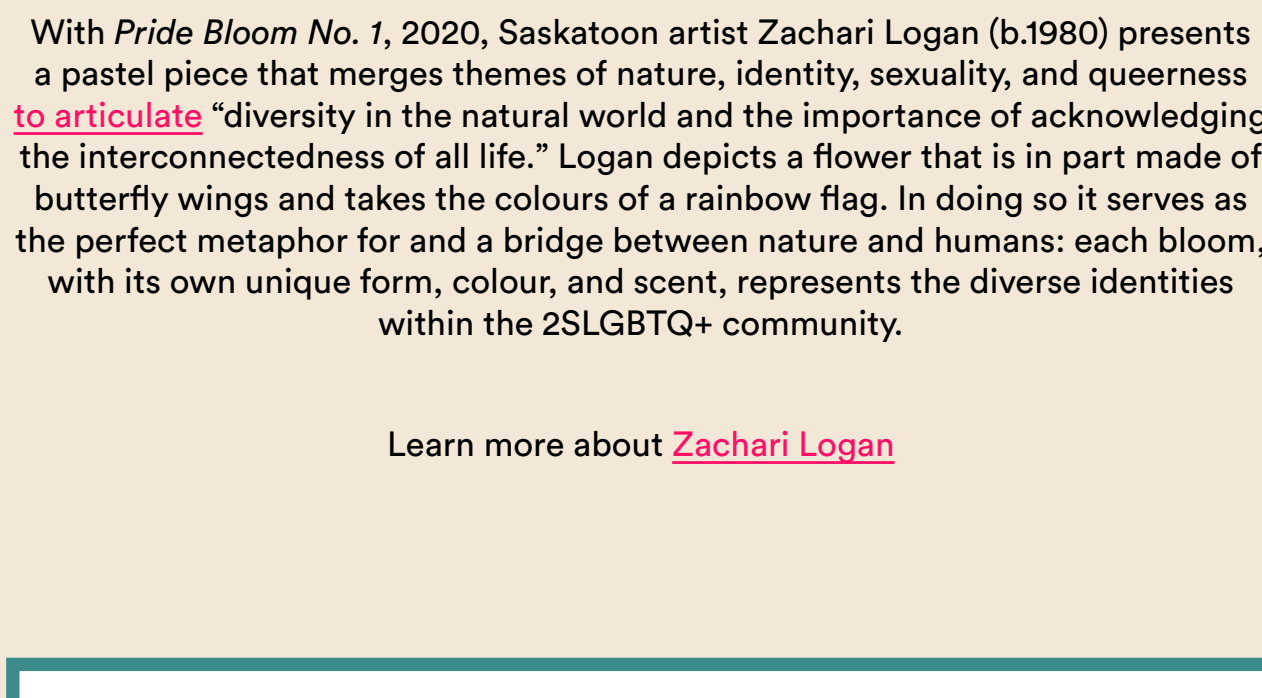
By Norval Morrisseau

Norval Morrisseau, *Children with Tree of Life*, ca. 1980-85, Art Gallery of Hamilton.

Norval Morrisseau (1931–2007), renowned as the *Mishomis* (grandfather) of contemporary Indigenous art in Canada, created a masterpiece with *Children with Tree of Life*, c.1980–85, which reflects his deep respect for the natural world, from animals to fauna and flora. The painting showcases the artist's characteristic style, blending traditional Anishinaabe imagery with bold colour and defined outlines. As author Carmen Robertson explains in her book *Norval Morrisseau: Life & Work*, the image presents three children surrounded by bears and birds, all silently observing the centrally placed and blooming [Tree of Life](#). The artist's use of colour brings his canvas alive; it's a work that encourages a spiritual connection to the natural environment, and represents how we must truly listen, sometimes without speaking, to feel an interconnectedness with nature.

Learn more in ACI's [Norval Morrisseau: Life & Work](#) by Carmen Robertson

PAVANE (TRIBUTE TO THE WATER LILIES)

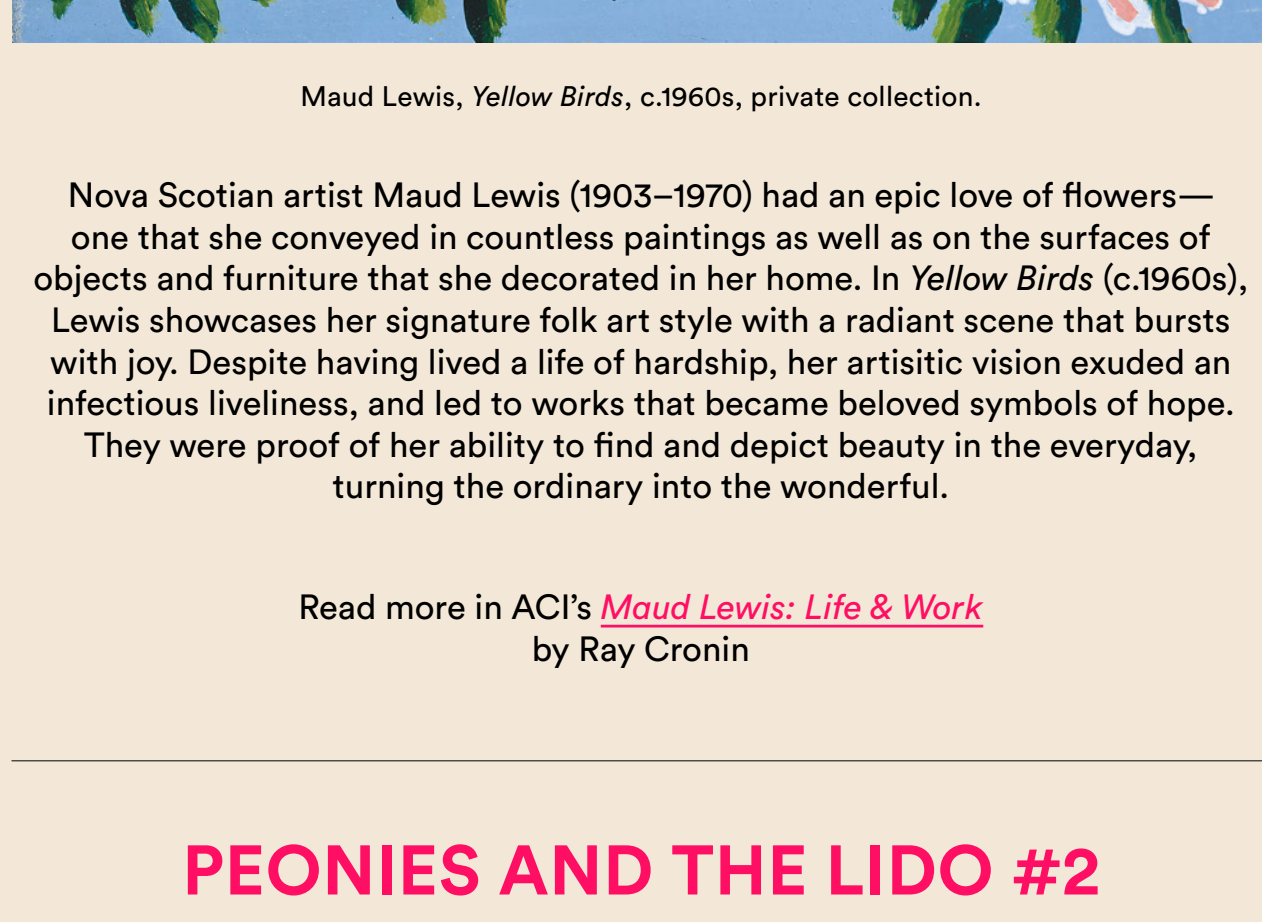
By Jean Paul Riopelle

Jean Paul Riopelle, *Pavane (Tribute to the Water Lilies)*, 1954, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

With *Pavane (Tribute to the Water Lilies)*, 1954, Jean Paul Riopelle (1932–2002) pays homage to the great French Impressionist Claude Monet but in a style that is entirely his own. The triptych showcases Riopelle's novel method of using a palette knife to freely manipulate paint that was applied straight from the tube onto the canvas. As [François-Marc Gagnon explains](#) in *Jean Paul Riopelle: Life & Work*, “he applied pigment seemingly spontaneously, guiding the motion of the paint with a palette knife to build up a deep and imperfect automatist style of impasto.” The work—named for a dance that was performed in costume at the Spanish court during the sixteenth century—presents a complex, textured surface that shimmers with movement, evoking the organic qualities of flowers, water, plants, and fleeting light.

Learn more in ACI's [Jean Paul Riopelle: Life & Work](#) by François-Marc Gagnon

PRIDE BLOOM NO. 1

By Zachari Logan

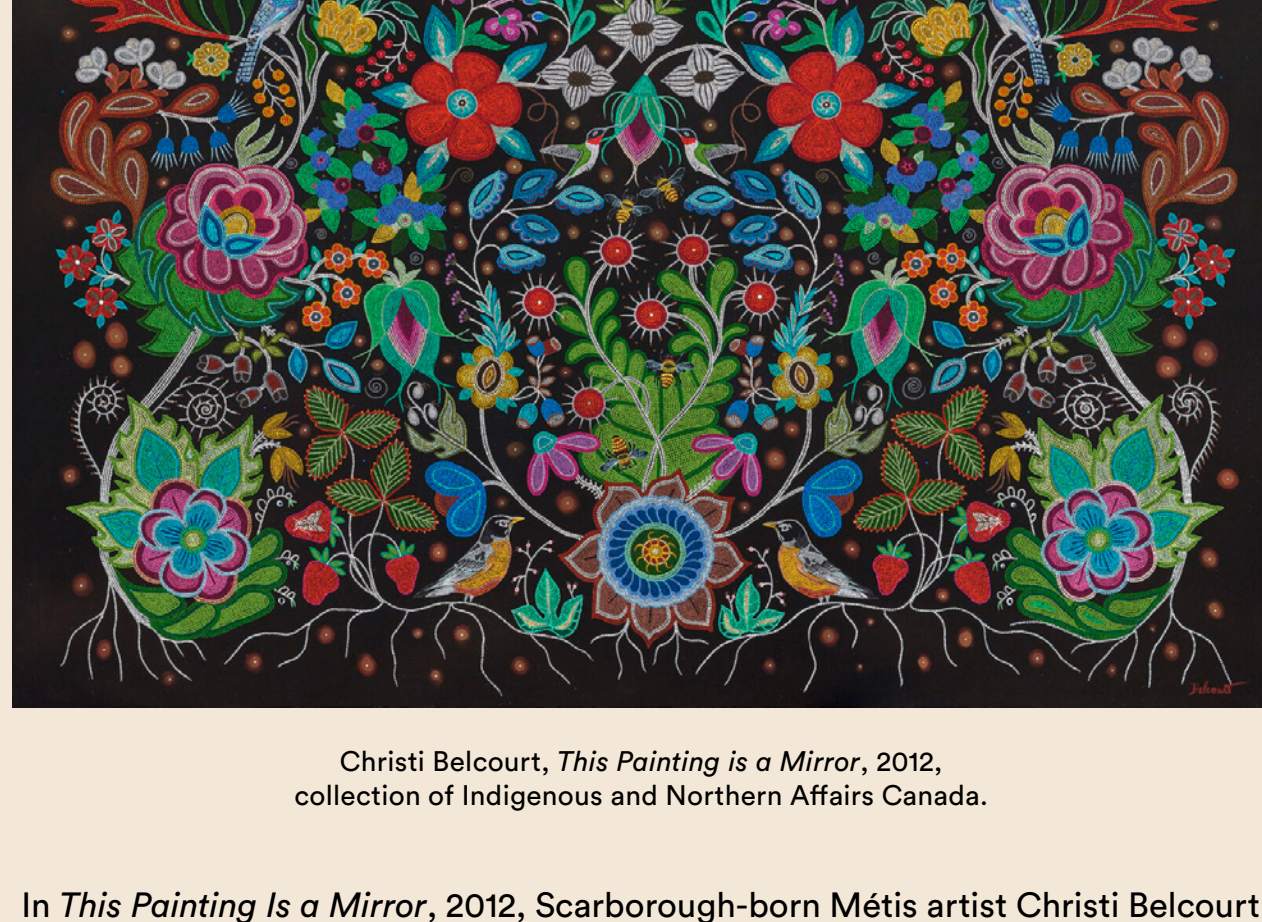
Zachari Logan, *Pride Bloom No. 1*, from Specimen Series, 2020, collection of Holt Renfrew.

With *Pride Bloom No. 1*, 2020, Saskatoon artist Zachari Logan (b.1980) presents a pastel piece that merges themes of nature, identity, sexuality, and queerness [to articulate](#) “diversity in the natural world and the importance of acknowledging the interconnectedness of all life.” Logan depicts a flower that is in part made of butterfly wings and takes the colours of a rainbow flag. In doing so it serves as the perfect metaphor for and a bridge between nature and humans: each bloom, with its own unique form, colour, and scent, represents the diverse identities within the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Learn more about [Zachari Logan](#)

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YELLOW BIRDS

By Maud Lewis

Maud Lewis, *Yellow Birds*, c.1960s, private collection.

Nova Scotian artist Maud Lewis (1903–1970) had an epic love of flowers—one that she conveyed in countless paintings as well as on the surfaces of objects and furniture that she decorated in her home. In *Yellow Birds* (c.1960s), Lewis showcases her signature folk art style with a radiant scene that bursts with joy. Despite having lived a life of hardship, her artistic vision exuded an infectious liveliness, and led to works that became beloved symbols of hope.

They were proof of her ability to find and depict beauty in the everyday, turning the ordinary into the wonderful.

Read more in ACI's [Maud Lewis: Life & Work](#) by Ray Cronin

PEONIES AND THE LIDO #2

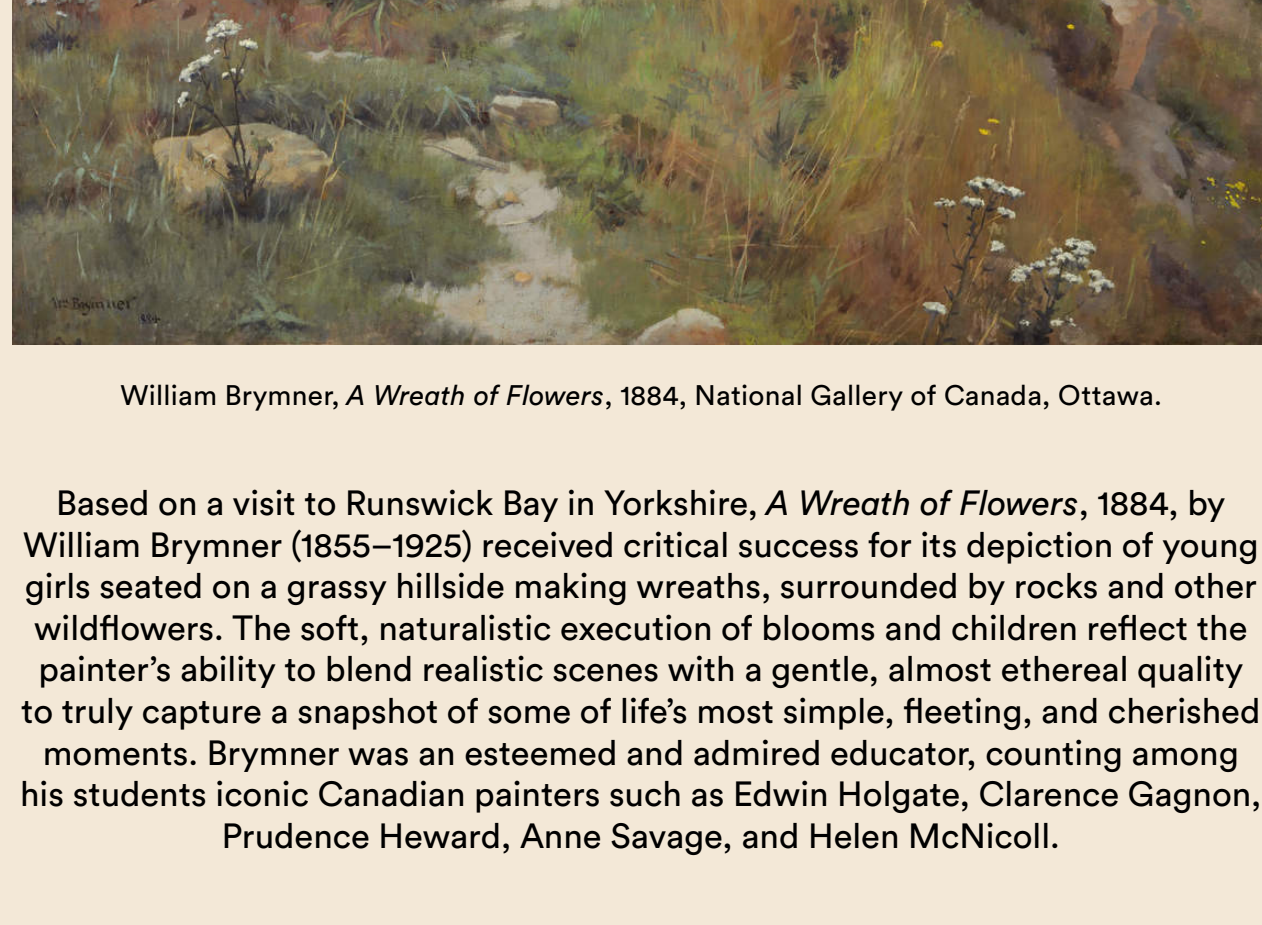
By Suzy Lake

Suzy Lake, *Peonies and the Lido #2*, 2011-2/2010, collection of the University of Toronto Art Centre.

Suzy Lake's *Peonies and the Lido #2* skillfully and satirically incorporates floral elements and self-portraiture to explore the inevitability of [aging and mortality](#). The artist presents herself in the centre of the work dressed in loose white linen, lounging on a chair at the Lido, a beach in Venice. She takes a drag from a cigarette—a reference to actor Dirk Bogarde's performance as Gustav von Aschenbach in the 1971 [film adaptation of Death in Venice](#). As Lake explains, peonies at their most lush stage are used as a symbol and a mirror for the viewer to confront the brevity of visual allure, resulting in a work that probes “[youth's seductive beauty](#).” By confronting these topics head-on, Lake invites viewers to celebrate the wisdom—and grace—that comes with age.

Learn more in ACI's [Suzy Lake: Life & Work](#) by Erin Silver

THIS PAINTING IS A MIRROR

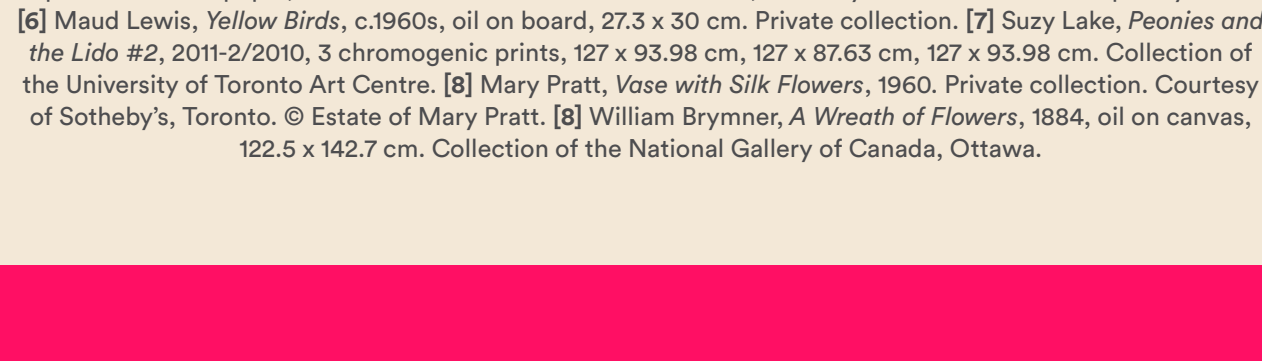
By Christi Belcourt

Christi Belcourt, *This Painting is a Mirror*, 2012, collection of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.

In *This Painting Is a Mirror*, 2012, Scarborough-born Métis artist Christi Belcourt (b.1966) interprets the interdependent natural world through an assemblage of various detailed plants, fruits, birds, and flowers. As she explains, her painting is [a translation of traditional Métis beadwork](#) in which she infuses dynamism into every petal, leaf, and stem. In doing so, she produces an almost living and breathing interplay of colour and texture and simulates much more than the beauty of flowers. The work echoes cultural narratives and environmental messages with spiritual significance, emphasizing harmony, balance, unity, and the interdependence between humans and the earth.

Learn more about [Christi Belcourt](#)

VASE WITH SILK FLOWERS

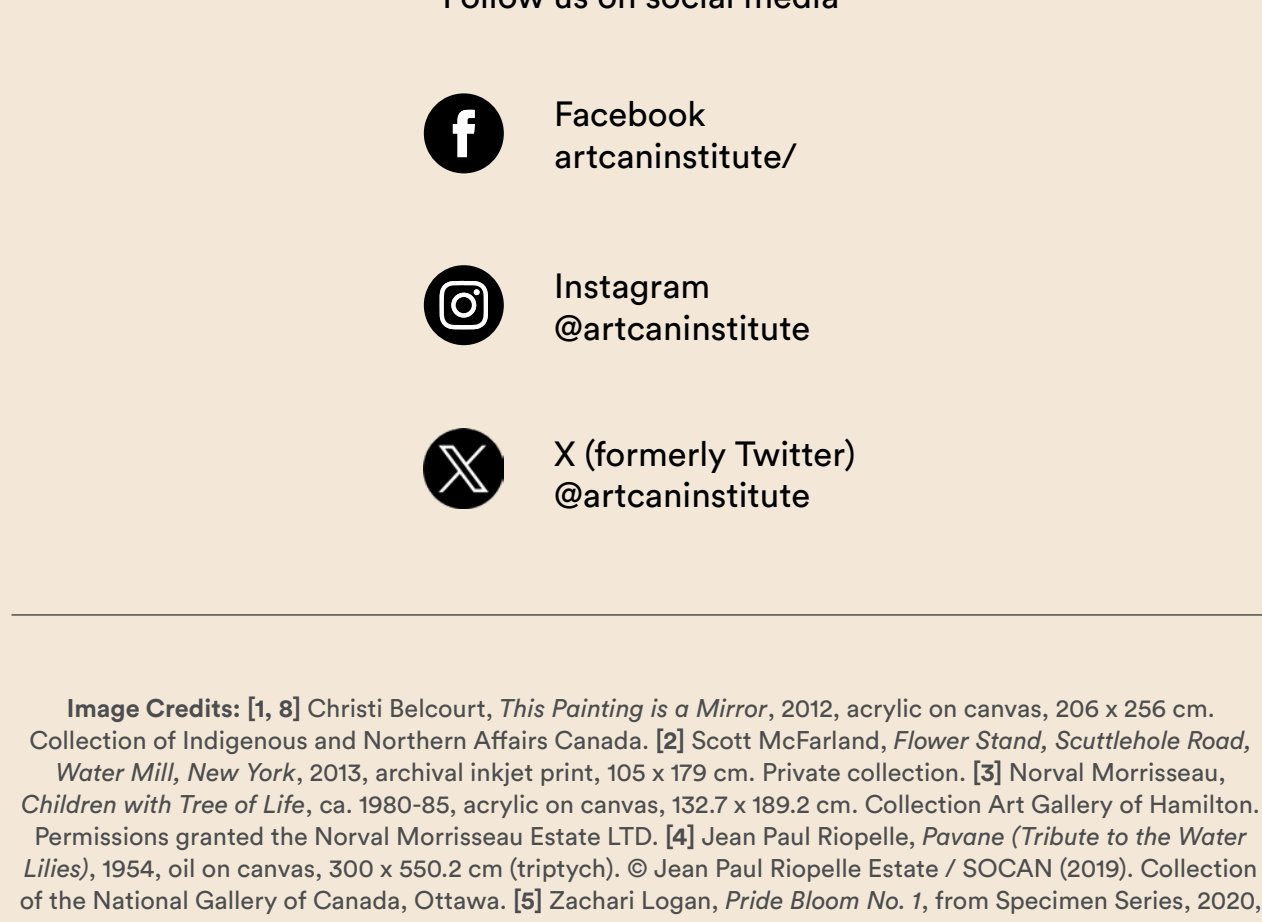
By Mary Pratt

Mary Pratt, *Vase with Silk Flowers*, 1960, private collection.

Created when Mary Pratt (1935–2018) was only 25 years old, *Vase with Silk Flowers* demonstrates the artist's ability to transform everyday objects from her home in New Brunswick into subjects of profound beauty. The composition features a shapely, pearly vase filled with an assortment of artificial flowers whose petals are rendered with remarkable precision, showcasing her keen eye for detail and [astonishing photorealism](#). As Ray Cronin notes in *Mary Pratt: Life & Work*, “What began as a desire to still time, to capture the fleeting moments to which [Pratt] was responding with such a strong visceral feeling, became an entire way of seeing the world.”

Read more in ACI's [Mary Pratt: Life & Work](#) by Ray Cronin

A WREATH OF FLOWERS

By William Brymner

William Brymner, *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

Based on a visit to Runswick Bay in Yorkshire, *A Wreath of Flowers*, 1884, by William Brymner (1855–1925) received critical success for its depiction of young girls seated on a grassy hillside making wreaths, surrounded by rocks and other wildflowers. The soft, naturalistic execution of blooms and children reflect the painter's ability to blend realistic scenes with a gentle, almost ethereal quality to truly capture a snapshot of some of life's most simple, fleeting, and cherished moments. Brymner was an esteemed and admired educator, counting among his students iconic Canadian painters such as Edwin Holgate, Clarence Gagnon, Prudence Heward, Anne Savage, and Helen McNicoll.

Learn more in ACI's [William Brymner: Life & Work](#) by Jocelyn Anderson

THANK YOU TO OUR BENEFACTORS

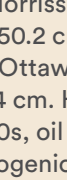
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